

we really suffer on this account ? Because youth has to continue the work we have undertaken, and every flaw and failing in its strength is likely to injure *our* work, that will fall into its hands. It is the sorrow at the imperfect guarantee of our immortality : or, if we only feel ourselves as executors of the human mission, it is the sorrow that this mission must pass to weaker hands than ours.

269.

THE AGES OF LIFE.—The comparison of the four ages of life with the four seasons of the year is a venerable piece of folly. Neither the first twenty nor the last twenty years of a life correspond to a season of the year, assuming that we are not satisfied with drawing a parallel between white hair and snow and similar colour-analogies. The first twenty years are a preparation for life in general, for the whole year of life, a sort of long New Year's Day. The last twenty review, assimilate, bring into union and harmony all that has been experienced till then: as, in a small degree, we do on every New Year's Eve with the whole past year. But in between there really lies an interval which suggests a comparison with the seasons—the time from the twentieth to the fiftieth year (to speak here of decades in the lump, while it is an understood thing that every one must refine for himself these rough outlines). Those three decades correspond to three seasons—summer, spring, and autumn. Winter human life has none, unless we like to call the (unfortunately) often intervening hard, cold, lonely,